

8-2011

# Forgiven: Creating the Role of Elizabeth Proctor

Laura Kay Harrell

*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd>



Part of the [Acting Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Harrell, Laura Kay, "Forgiven: Creating the Role of Elizabeth Proctor" (2011). *Theses and Dissertations*. 110.  
<http://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/110>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact [scholar@uark.edu](mailto:scholar@uark.edu).



FORGIVEN: CREATING THE ROLE OF ELIZABETH PROCTOR

FORGIVEN: CREATING THE ROLE OF ELIZABETH PROCTOR

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts in Drama

By

Laura Harrell  
West Texas A&M University  
Bachelor of Arts, in Musical Theatre 2007

August 2011  
University of Arkansas

**ABSTRACT**

The following documents my process of creating the role of Elizabeth Proctor in Arthur Miller's The Crucible. It follows the audition process, table work sessions and my own personal and detailed journal entries I kept in rehearsals while creating this role.

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council

Thesis Director:

---

Amy Herzberg

Thesis Committee:

---

Mavourneen Dwyer

---

Kate Frank

## **DUPLICATION RELEASE**

I hereby authorize the University of Arkansas Libraries to duplicate this Thesis when needed for research and/or scholarship.

Agreed \_\_\_\_\_  
Laura Harrell

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I. AUDITIONS	1
II. PRE-REHEARSALS	2
III. JOURNAL	3
IV. CONCLUSION	22
V. BIBLIOGRAPHY	23



## I. AUDITIONS

The audition process for this production of The Crucible was unlike any other series of auditions I've experienced. It began with a high volume return of callbacks from the season's initial audition which was due to a lack of a stage manager at that time. It was fairly informal, with different pairings of actors taking on bits from scenes. Kate Frank, the director, would then ask for specific scene work as she saw fit. At one point, I was called into the hall to prepare with my partner to read for Anne Putnam, but after spending an hour working the scene, I never got a chance to read for the role before the next set of cuts were made. This was just as well, because it soon became clear that Kate was only considering me for Elizabeth Proctor or Rebecca Nurse. Once the first set of callbacks were done, Patrice Foster and I were the only ones reading for both Elizabeth and Rebecca Nurse while two more actors, Will Grayson and Drew Johnson, went head to head for the roles of John Proctor and Danforth. This callback process was challenging as I found myself competing with my best friend for the role of Elizabeth. At this same time, however, I had a much different kind of challenge from my own personal life. For the month, prior to auditions, I had watched a beloved pet die before my eyes. Our pet passed the morning before we all had another callback session, but Kate expressed great sympathy and helped me when I could barely hold my head up from lack of sleep and the anxiety and sadness that came with losing him. Kate helped me by postponing callbacks that evening for me so that I could take the time necessary to compose myself. My mind was not always in the audition for the next few days, I will admit. But my inner life flowed freely when it came time to imagine Elizabeth losing her beloved husband. Maybe that helped me in the long run, but it was definitely not a "method" I'd like to relive again. Once callbacks were back in swing, there were several nights where I

read with both Drew and Will. Between the emotional requirements of the script and the tensions of hoping to get that thesis role, I was more than ready for the cast list to go up, either way.

## II. PRE-REHEARSALS

We started our first “unofficial” rehearsal on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Our goal was to be seventy five percent off book by our first true rehearsal starting on October 12<sup>th</sup>. Kate suggested some readings regarding the Salem Witch trials. I opted to purchase The Devil’s Snare by Mary Beth Norton later that week to do some further reading. I found the book very interesting and it included several stories about the real lives of the lesser known characters that appeared in the play, including Sarah Goode and Sarah Osbourne. I would have liked to have had more time to delve into this literature, but as soon as the cast list went up, I had very limited research time as we went head first into rehearsals. At this first meeting, we discussed how important the dialect coaching was going to be, as well as how much practice and discipline it would take for us to really have a cohesive accent as a cast. Kate discussed how she wanted hints of the English dialect from the “West Country” (like those in Devon and Somerset) combined with the use of the so-called “spa a” sound of the British Received Pronunciation dialect. Words like “yard” would sound more like “yah-rd”, with an emphasis on the vowels in the words, but punctuated with a sharpened consonant ending. The goal of this hand-crafted dialect work was to find a clear, rural sounding accent for those of us who were playing the more salt of the earth type characters.

### III. JOURNAL ENTRIES

Monday September 15<sup>th</sup>

This rehearsal was exclusively a table work session with Kate and Will Grayson who is playing John Proctor. We discussed how important Elizabeth is to this play and why she is here. She is the wife of John Proctor, and her illness played a big part in John being driven to have an affair with Abigail. Elizabeth then firing Abigail is the catalyst for Abigail's accusations. We also took a good look at how other characters regard Elizabeth and which of those adjectives I chose to believe actually fit her. Abigail is the one character who has the nastiest things to say about Elizabeth. She calls her a "cold, sniveling woman". (Miller, *The Crucible* 14) She reveals to John that she believes Elizabeth is also "sickly" and "envious". (Miller, *The Crucible* 14) I know that these sorts of descriptive words can be detrimental if I focused on giving Abigail a reason to say these things about me. This is a sort of parody of the real person that Abigail has created for herself in order to make sense of why John has not left Elizabeth yet. Reverend Hale accuses Elizabeth of being "stone" and having "no wifely tenderness" once she refuses to convince John to confess to witchcraft. (Miller, *The Crucible* 43) He cannot understand Elizabeth's compassion for John not giving in to society, and instead insists that she has no soul if she can stand back and watch her husband be sent to the gallows. John, however, offers the most insight into her soul. John states in court that she "cannot lie". (Miller, *The Crucible* 69) He also refers to her as a "good wife" (Miller, *The Crucible* 68) several times and even goes so far as to say about Elizabeth: "that goodness will not die for me." (Miller, *The Crucible* 47) He also reveals her to be a "marvel" when she sees him for the last time. (Miller, *The Crucible* 84) However, when Elizabeth and John begin to argue about him visiting Abigail, he harshly insists:

“an everlasting funeral marches around your heart” and reminds her that “you forget nothing and forgive nothing.” (Miller, *The Crucible* 30) I use these sentences to inform my inner life of the jealousy that I simply cannot shake. Elizabeth, in Scene 4 opens up her heart to John and tells him that “It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery...” and that she is “so plain, so poorly-made” and that “It were a cold house I kept...” (Miller, *The Crucible* 86) I use this text to justify John’s adultery by belittling myself in order to later ask for forgiveness. We also discussed the most important major events of the play. The Initiating event takes place in Scene 1, where Betty Parris is found “sick” at her home. This affects me because she is Abigail’s cousin and I know that they are in cahoots with one another. I also know how devious Abigail is and how desperately she wants to be with my husband. The inciting event happens when Tituba and the other young girls are found to have been dabbling in witchcraft. This sets the town abuzz with talk of Tituba manipulating the girls. Tituba then tells Reverend Parris that the reason for the girls’ behavior is because of several women in town who are thought to be witches. Now the name-calling begins. The Central event of the play is when John Proctor tears up his confession in prison. This completely involves me because he is my husband and I know that now he is certain to hang for his decision, but he will save his soul by doing so. The main event of the play is my very last line,”He have his goodness now. God forbid I take that from him.” Miller, *The Crucible* 91) This is the moment when John finally receives my forgiveness. Also, during this table work session, I realized how very important imagination work and “as-if” work would come into play when it came to portraying Elizabeth. I would be actively using every element of the events that take place in the action of the play. The need for spiritual relief is something both John and Elizabeth Proctor strive for throughout this story. I found that Elizabeth’s super objective is to live a good and righteous life. This is evident by Elizabeth’s inability to lie. This is

a part of her moral spine. We discussed the myriad of emotions that course through Elizabeth in the end scene of the play with John when he is about to be sent to the gallows. She must feel such great relief when he tears up the confession, but also her heart must surely be filled with terror when she hears the drum and knows the reality that awaits her husband at the end of a noose. We discussed how, in this sense, John gets to be his own person even when the world can't hold him. Elizabeth's love for him helps her to see this truth. I couldn't think of a more beautiful relationship between any two literary characters. I could tell right away that I was going to enjoy working on this dynamic role.

### September 20<sup>th</sup>

Today we watched a PBS film that Kate brought in about the Salem Witch trials. She forewarned us that the acting was less than desirable, but that the accent work was something to note as well as how it focused on the historical accuracy of the events that took place during the Salem Witch trials, which is something that Arthur Miller's The Crucible does not. I found the ways that they pronounced "Tituba" to be different from how I've heard most teachers and actors say it. I also found the story about the young girls in the village using egg whites in a glass jar of water to tell them who they were going to fall in love with a very interesting visual. It reminded me of young girls today playing with a Ouija board or a "fortune-teller" made out of paper in a fifth grade class. It made me see how something that started as simply an innocent game played by a group of religiously repressed young girls could escalate and morph into something that caused people in the village to believe they were possessed. I could see the threat of being manipulated by a woman who came from a different civilization and who believed in "non-traditional" Christian practices. Once the video was done, the group conversation took a religious

and superstitious turn. A couple of the younger girls in the cast expressed their fears about possessions. To my surprise, they offered up their opinions that it is possible, that the girls in Salem in 1692 were indeed possessed. It makes me examine my own beliefs and I see how aligned they tend to be with John Proctor, more than with Elizabeth. While Elizabeth knows her Commandments, I would have to look them up. While Elizabeth (before she got sick) went to Church on the Sabbath, I am more apt to be busy with some project on any given Sunday. But I grew up in a rural town in Texas where people identify you by your name and your religious denomination. I can certainly relate to the Proctor's beliefs concerning religion. The name Elizabeth is a biblical name and even means a variation of "God's promise" or "My God is a vow". This is an overwhelming reminder of how I must adjust my own personal values, to substitute in Elizabeth's personal relationship to God in playing this role.

### September 21<sup>st</sup>

Tonight we are working once again on our dialects. I struggle with the simple word "I" or "aye", which turns into a soft "oy" sound. Dropping the "g" on the end of "-ing" words however, is not difficult, as that is very close to my contemporary, everyday speech. The shortening of certain words containing the "r" sound is something I need to focus on as in words such as "court" and "Mary". Examining my language used in the text, I see several instances of words that drop the endings, such as "weepin'" and "hangin'". This reveals to me that I have taken on the rural mannerisms of speech that surround me. I do not formalize my words or add any poetry to what I am saying. This resonates with my duty to my family as well as my wish to live a righteous, simple life. I also tend to create questions out of statements. For instance, I choose to say: "She said it had naught to do with witchcraft, did she not?" and "Mr. Hale, I do think you are

suspecting me somewhat? Are you not?" Both of these sentences are examples of Elizabeth "telling" the person what they think and then prompting that person for an answer. Also, I noticed in my text the repetition of starting sentences with the word "Ay" or "Aye" in this script. I understand this to be part of my upbringing and response as a dutiful wife. If I were to substitute that for a modern vernacular, it would be the same as "Yes m'am" or "Yes sir".

Similarly, my use of imagery and choice of words inform my acting choices. I tell John that "The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you." I find this choice of the word "magistrate" is much more significant than the loose term of "judge", which I chose not to say. This seems particularly biting because it suggests that there is a prosecution that this alleged "magistrate" has the power to decide on, whereas to "judge" simply means to make a proclamation about his behavior. I also love the use of the imagery of "she has an arrow in you yet, John Proctor, and you know it well!" The arrow, to me, signifies both the permanent hole in his heart that Abigail has created as well as the phallic symbol of the arrow. This fuels me to remembering the pain of imagining my husband in bed with another woman. After the dialect session, we worked with Kate once again for a table session which also included Jared Hanlin who plays Reverend Hale and Molly Carroll who plays Mary Warren. During this session, Kate asked me to come up with Elizabeth's secret, which she suggests is something I can hold onto throughout the play. I will be thinking about this and hopefully I shall come up with something significant. We discussed Elizabeth's objective for Act II, which is to get John to tell the court that these accusations are a fraud. And by Act III, Elizabeth's objective is to protect her husband. We ran the part of Scene 2 with John, Hale, Mary and Elizabeth for the first time tonight. It was very wobbly and seemed ill prepared on all our parts. I now see the care it's going to take and the prep work that needs to be done before I come to the next rehearsal so that I won't be one of the ones causing us to slow down the progress.

September 22<sup>nd</sup>

Today we really dug into Scene 2, this time with a much better understanding of what all is going on. My objective for the scene is to get John to go to town and expose Abigail's finger-pointing game as the hoax she told him it is. I desperately need this to happen because I know Abigail wishes to see me out of the picture and to have John for herself. I know that if she starts blaming others in town for the source of their strange behaviors, then my name will be at the top of that list. After the first run of this scene, Kate informed me that I was using a pattern of holding in my chest. I imagine it comes from my preconceived notions about Elizabeth. I am trying to use my Alexander Technique to think "up and away" to see if that relieves the hold. I started out tonight focusing too much on Elizabeth's toughness. If I focus too much on "being brave" or "tough" early on, then it ruins the shock in Act III when Elizabeth lies in court. I need to allow her vulnerability to shine through. In Scene 2, I need to find her utter fear regarding Mary Warren and what she is capable of. Tonight we played with some "As-if" work in this scene which really excited me. I imagined that Reverend Hale entered the room with a gun held at his waist, pointed always at either John or myself. Even when he sat down at the table, I imagined that gun resting just below the tabletop, loaded and ready to shoot at any minute. This intensified the situation greatly for my actor's imagination. It kept my focus always on how best to get him in and out of that house as quickly as possible. We also discussed whether or not Elizabeth is afraid of John and how to explore that. I also chose to physically align myself with John during this scene, as his "backup". I stand directly off of his right shoulder, showing my utmost support for him at all times. In discussion after the run of the scene, Kate brought up a good point for me to consider; We know that Elizabeth is afraid of what John is capable of, but is she physically afraid of him as well? This is something to be explored. After rehearsal, I gave



some good thought as to what could possibly be Elizabeth's big secret. I came to the conclusion that as Elizabeth, once I learned I was pregnant with John's child after the 21 months of no sexual contact, I momentarily considered doing physical harm to me to lose the child while I was awaiting the trial and in the prison. However, I decided against it when determined that I have no right to dictate life or death just as I scorn those who are choosing life or death for my own husband. In the end, of course, this decision to keep the child is what saves my life because they cannot hang a pregnant woman.

#### September 24<sup>th</sup>

Tonight, we read through the last scene in Scene 4, where Elizabeth says goodbye to John. This scene is going to take some very detailed moment-before work, and very quickly, as I have to get into dirt makeup, ragged costume and shackles backstage during my prep time. I must evaluate all of my given circumstances prior to my entrance which include being 3 months pregnant and having just spent the entirety of my pregnancy in a filthy jail cell without my children or husband near me. I am here to give John my apology for being so cold. I need his forgiveness for that. This is very urgent for Elizabeth. I now see that my lie has condemned him and it is indeed my fault for wanting to help and protect him.

#### October 4<sup>th</sup>

Today we had our design presentation for The Crucible. I find the ever changing beams of this design concept to be an interesting addition to the play. We also discussed the use of light and how it will feel as though characters are emerging from nowhere suddenly into a pool of light. The use of dramatic up light, side light or back light are implemented as well to give an

eerie, ominous feeling throughout the play. We then moved on to our first full read-through of the play as a full cast. Some interesting things were discovered by now. In Scene 2, I discovered Elizabeth's sense of hope for the first time. When I say to John "Oh, you're done then?" in response to him being out late planting in the edge of the forest, I find that my inner life is wanting so desperately for this to be true and for him to have finally changed. I hope that he has no excuse to leave now or in the immediate future. Scene 2 and Scene 4 are the most worked scenes, but when we got to Scene 3 at the trial, I felt less secure about Elizabeth's emotional life. This will come once I'm off book and on my feet, and I have to remind myself that this is just a read-through. I know there is much progress to be made. Afterwards, we discussed a little about how in 1692, this was a time of land-grabbing throughout Salem and the surrounding areas. Most likely the girls' parents were telling them specific names of the people in town in order to move in and take their territory once they had been summoned to trial after being accused of witchcraft. We also discussed how religion and politics of Salem were bound together as one. This caused many people to be under the scrutiny of what the religious Puritans of Salem deemed was the truth despite the secular laws of the land, which reminds us today of so many issues we still face with same-sex marriage and women's abortion rights.

### October 12<sup>th</sup>

Today I worked on figuring out my time line for Elizabeth in Scene 2. These given circumstances aid in my creation of this role. I fall ill several months before the play begins. My imagination work filled in the blanks. Here I decided that I had been ill for a total of nine months before the action of the play begins and I suffered from an upper respiratory infection that was never properly treated and escalated and caused my body to become very weak and unable to

fight the infection. Seven months before the action of the play, John has an affair with Abigail. One month later, he confesses to me about his affair. There is absolutely no intimate contact between us now. Eight days before the action of the play is when the girls in the village start to make accusations about the women in town being witches. One week before the action of the scene, John goes to visit Abigail who tells him that it is all a hoax. I know about John's visit and am reluctant to let him go away to visit her, but know that it is necessary to get to the bottom of whatever it is these girls are conjuring either way. The night before the action of the play we make love for the first time in over nine months, and we later find out that I become pregnant from this. I did some work to find out my specific values as well. Elizabeth loves her children, her faith and her husband, John. She likes the friendship of Giles Corey and Rebecca Nurse. She hates dishonesty and lies. She dislikes John procrastinating about going to town to tell the court that the dancing in the woods was all a misunderstanding. This basic outline helps me find ways to fight for the positive in the scene work. My intense love for John is exactly the dilemma that arises when I am forced to lie, which I equally despise, to save his soul.

### October 13<sup>th</sup>

Today, we work more on blocking in Act 1 of the play. I'm not in the entire first scene, so I realize that once the play is up and running I will have ample time backstage for prep work, which I really want to utilize. Overall, blocking this scene seems to have some interesting dilemmas in terms of the set. It's difficult to work around the angle of the table at times, but Kate is working with us to come up with new ideas that don't make us feel awkward or strange when we're moving. I'm also still struggling with memorization in coordination with the dialect, which I will work on outside of rehearsal with Mavourneen.

October 14<sup>th</sup>

Today we finished blocking Scene 2. After running through Scene 2, I realize that I am flying off the handle way too early, way too fast. I need to keep in mind that Mary Warren is in the next room, which threatens me greatly. This needs to be a gradual build so that it becomes even clearer how desperate I am once my home is filled with men who are all chomping at the bit to send me to court to be tried as a witch. I am tired of my husband speaking for me when the ridiculousness of the poppet is being brought up. I finally decide to stop being polite and interject with my own questions about what a needle signifies. I must determine if my suspicions are right and Abigail Williams has something to do with this. I also realize that I am being too brave when they rush me off to jail. While focusing on trying to save face for John, I let myself seem too noble and I'm not focusing on the absolute terror I have in my heart that he might not come for me in jail. I also figured out my timeline for this section of the play. After they seize me from my house, I am "in-waiting" for two weeks to be sent to court where I have no contact with John or my children.

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup>

For these three days we took a break from The Crucible and focused on callbacks for the rest of the season. I find this to be more than difficult what with balancing such a heavy Arthur Miller play, teaching, class work, home work and callbacks all at the same time. I'll be excited to be done with callbacks so I can finally focus on the play at hand. I feel like I'm spreading myself too thin as it is.

October 18<sup>th</sup>

Tonight we focused on running Scene 2 now that we've completely blocked it. I feel like progress is being made and clearer actions are being discovered. At some points though, I feel Will and I are just trying to one-up each other in our argument and that we need a much stronger build rather than an explosive yelling match. Also, the fear that Mary Warren is in the next room and can listen to our conversations is a deadly risk that I'm not giving as much attention to as I should. I will make sure this is something I explore in the next run of this scene.

October 20<sup>th</sup>

We are now working on Scene 3, the courtroom scene. Scene 3 is still a bit of a struggle once I come into the courtroom. I find it painfully obvious that all the courtroom and audience's focus is on me and I find it hard not to be self-aware in those moments. My objective for this scene is to save my husband's reputation. My inner struggle is that I value honesty and know that if I lie and say that I did not know him to be a lecher, that I will be contradicting my own integrity. However, I love my husband deeply, and want to answer correctly in order to get him out of this spotlight and let us return to our normal lives. After rehearsal I spent a great deal of time focusing on the timeline for Act 2. Once I am in prison for my two-week waiting period, I am finally put into a jail cell. Here, I wait for nearly 3 months before I see John again in the last scene. I have to allow myself to use the accompanying circumstances of my now visible pregnancy to be a part of my inner life.

October 21<sup>st</sup>

When working on Scene 4, I realize that this is the highest stakes I've ever had in a play before. I realize the amount of work that needs to go into this, but I find it's already easy to

connect to Elizabeth's terror and love for her husband through connecting my own imagination to my love for Will Grayson, my boyfriend of five years. This engages my imagination even more since Will plays John Proctor, and every night I see the person I care most about being sentenced to the gallows. Tonight, Kate made me aware that my old acting habits of using my head movements to tell the story look huge on a bare stage with just Will and me. I must squash this habit right now or it's going to get in the way of my work later on when it will be too late to correct it. I need to think neutral and focus on minimal movements and let the story tell itself. I think it comes down to trusting oneself onstage, but in such a vulnerable role, I find that a hard match. However, I am determined to make it work.

#### October 22<sup>nd</sup>

Tonight we worked further on Scene 4. This is an epic scene with nearly everyone on stage and it certainly provides its challenges. I was positioned in the far downstage right corner of the stage, which causes the focus to shift to me when I am bawling my eyes out when John is about to tear the letter. I cannot suppress what I'm feeling, so I have to focus that much more of my attention on Will in hopes that by concentrating on my partner, I will not cause the audience's eyes to stray from John in the scene. I find that I had to find a balance of absolute terror in my heart versus happiness for my husband's honesty. The moment-before work in this scene had to be specific. I imagined sitting in my cell, knowing that John was kept in the jail as well, and that my lie to the courtroom was the very reason he was incarcerated. I ran through a mantra of "you're a terrible, cold hearted wife" several times before I started the scene. Once Reverend Hale brings me onstage to get me to speak with John in hopes that I will convince him to confess, I now know that I will get a chance to see him once again. It is now that I can pursue

my objective for the scene and can ask him for my own forgiveness, which I desperately need to put my soul at ease.

### October 23<sup>rd</sup>

Tonight we ran Act 1 after the hiatus of focusing on Act 2. Tonight I focused on giving myself imagination work to do before entering for the top of Scene 2. I walked myself through an evening of “what-if” work. It stimulated me but I still think I can do more and personalize it. I finally found that I connected to the fear of Mary Warren this time around. The theme of hysteria that presents itself in The Crucible aids me in finding the delicate nature with which I must handle Mary. I know her ties to Abigail and the terrifying power that is culminating from this group of girls. Molly Carroll and I go offstage together in Scene 2 when Elizabeth is asked to summon Mary Warren and we both imagine exactly what was discussed between the two women when Hale wishes to see her regarding the poppet. We have started improvising a little about what goes on when I go to fetch her. I hope we can keep this up throughout the run.

### October 25<sup>th</sup>

Tonight we worked Scene 3 and 4. I felt like tonight was a struggle with aesthetic problems onstage regarding the blocking. I never thought that blocking would be difficult with nothing but two benches on a bare stage, but I guess the depth of the stage has created those issues. I think we finally might have solved it with Will and I sitting on the same bench at the end to share a nice moment before hell breaks loose.

### October 26<sup>th</sup>

Now we have finally put the pieces of the puzzle together and run the entire play. My notes from Kate were that I need to formalize my movements. I am taking steps that are too broad on stage and I need to minimize them for quicker, less evasive movements. Again, I feel as though I'm not letting the text speak for itself and am resorting to yelling in Scene 2. I started the scene with an awareness of Mary Warren, but that gradually slipped away once I accused John of not being able to testify against Abigail because of the connection he still has with her.

#### October 27<sup>th</sup>

Tonight we ran Act 2. Memorization is still an issue, but it's coming along. I am finding it easier to be less self aware in the courtroom scene when I focus on reading body language from John, trying to find which answer I should give. I am desperate for just one look, one nod, whatever I can get to make the right decision that I know will ultimately decide my husband's fate. I feel like Elizabeth's disgust with herself and her inability to be what she calls a "loving wife" could be remedied in her mind if only she knew how to save her husband in this split second.

#### October 28<sup>th</sup>

For some reason I'm still struggling with lines in Act 1. I don't know whether it's that I'm focusing too much on the dialect accompanying them or if I'm just not giving it the time or dedication it needs. I may have jumped the gun and started in too early on building that inner-life and through-line of Elizabeth's.



October 29<sup>th</sup>

I spent last night after rehearsal nailing down lines. I feel more confident with Scene 2 and took the pressure off of myself to focus on the dialect. This may have been what I needed all along. I'm excited for the run-through tomorrow night.

October 30<sup>th</sup>

This was our first full run through off book. There were some dilemmas still with the blocking and I hope they are addressed sooner than later. I feel that once Mary Warren enters in Scene 2, that the scene then becomes about me not being blocked by the cabinet. My blocking doesn't feel organic, it feels like I'm an accessory on the set that needs to be moved to display the artwork that is the set. But on the acting spectrum, I felt as though some great strides were made tonight. I felt the heat from Hale as soon as he entered the room, and I cannot ignore my utter need to help John recall the Commandments. I used the gun as-if work too, which worked well and I think I will continue to use this throughout the run.

November 1<sup>st</sup>

Finally! We have addressed the blocking in Scene 2. Kate was right on board with us and knew something must be done. We moved the bench back and pushed the table back to create a much bigger acting space for Will and I where we can still have our own side of the room. We broke down the problematic sections bit by bit to find the shortest and easiest route from point A to point B. Now, the servant type role I play to my husband is much easier in the new triangular shape we form onstage with me standing off his right shoulder. I also discovered tonight how my tasks onstage are the ones I've done for years and they have now become mindless. I make

the rabbit stew for my husband and fetch the water, hanging up his coat and clothes. However, now I live with this strain that John has put upon us and that lurks in the subtext of my tasks. My body is still taking on those physical everyday tasks, but it's more like a machine set on automatic pilot than that of a loving wife aiding her husband. I like this, because it gives me lots of room to live with the pain and withdrawal that comes from having a husband I want to trust, but simply cannot. I also found in the stage directions something that bothered me. It states that Elizabeth enters humming at the beginning of Scene 2. I believe she is too distraught wondering what her husband has been doing out so late knowing that he recently went to visit to Abigail. Humming, at least to me, suggests someone at ease or passing the time. Kate hasn't pushed me to do this action, but I just noticed it for the first time and wondered if that was an original direction written by Arthur Miller or if it was added later by a director.

#### November 2<sup>nd</sup>

We ran Scene 4 once again tonight. Tonight I played with the idea of privacy in this scene with John. I want to be alone with him for this moment to discuss asking my own forgiveness for being a cold wife, but all the while knowing we are surrounded and at any minute someone will be coming for him. I was being too haphazard when I told him I cannot judge him. This is for him, forget everyone else. We are the only two people in the world at this moment, as far as I'm concerned. I also, for the first time tonight, grasped the magnitude of the absolute terror that comes when he asks me to play God and help him decide whether or not he should confess.

November 3<sup>rd</sup>

Focusing on Scene 3 was the biggest goal for this evening. My moment-before work is finally engaging my imagination. I am living with the fact that I haven't seen John in two weeks, and have no idea of what has happened in those fourteen days. I asked myself: Did he leave me for Abigail? Did he call Abigail out? Has the whole thing blown over? Will I get released? Has John confessed about the affair? I imagine the distance and the seclusion I have felt locked away in this holding cell. Then suddenly, Reverend Parris appears at my door and without many words at all, summons me to the courtroom. I recall the solitude I have felt from the two-weeks in confinement in a sharp contrast to suddenly being thrust into the spotlight with twenty strange faces staring back at me. Hopefully this moment before work will adhere to the scene soon. But this rehearsal tonight felt very tiring and we're worn out trying to get to our big opening night in ten days. Energy felt low and I felt like I was just running through the actions. I hope there is a second wind that I catch before we open.

November 4<sup>th</sup>

Tonight I got a full run for my birthday. It was indeed a better gift than last night, and we may have found the renewed sense of excitement that was lacking from that previous run. Everyone was on top of their work, and it was a complete joy to be a part of this! I utilized my backstage alone time to start my imagination work for my first entrance. I found myself with my heart pounding and racing upon first seeing John when he gets home at the top of Scene 2. Feeling not only mental changes in my state of being, but now having physical changes in my body lets me know my imagination work is serving me well! I feel very encouraged.

November 5<sup>th</sup>

I got some dialect notes today from Mavourneen who watched the play last night. She had trouble hearing me behind the proscenium. I will work to give power to my voice while not letting it be too harsh or cold. Resonance is what I need to focus on. We went back and hit some spot work in the play. This was very helpful and detailed. I found a new moment with John where I bring up the children and how I have not seen them since I've been imprisoned. Will and I connected in a way that was completely unspoken but the subtext carried us over into another conversation on an entirely different plane of communication. It was just beautiful.

November 6<sup>th</sup>

We now start our full runs from here on out. Tonight we had some technicians there for the Tech Watch, which I think always throws the play off at first, just having other bodies present in the audience for the first time. Now we get the challenge of adding other elements of costume and lights and sound. We need to be on top of our work if we're going to make it cohesive and not lose any of the beautiful work we've found in the last few days.

November 8<sup>th</sup>

My nearly hour long prep-work sessions have started. While everyone was getting into makeup and ready for Scene 1, I had this entire time to let my imagination run wild. I used this time to give myself a very in-depth look at my moment-before work for Scene 2. I imagined living with the fact that John is two hours late to dinner. I also engaged my own inner life by combining aspects of my own life, imagining Will's car parked down the street at another girl's

house when he tells me he ran to the store. This fuels a feeling of jealousy and suspicion. My mind raced as to what he could possibly be doing with those two hours at this girl's house. I then meld the "as-if" and substitution work together once I make my first entrance onstage. When he comes home, I catch him with his back turned to me, so I get to evaluate what it is he is doing before he sees me. This very short, but very important few seconds, gives me only a very slight relief when I see him with his gun. I also explored the urgency needed in getting him to go to Salem now to tell about Abigail's fraud, which is quickly squashed by him when he says that he will think on it.

#### Run of the show Friday November 13<sup>th</sup> -- 22<sup>nd</sup>

I am not doing journal entries night by night, simply because of time. Each night I discovered something new. The biggest discovery is the overall journey of Elizabeth. She starts the play uncomfortable with insecurity and suspicion of her husband and ends with the ability to now forgive him once she sees that he cannot live with a false confession hanging above his head that would forever taint his soul. We opened the show on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> and as a cast, I know we all presented a product we were all proud of. Each night, I found new and different ways to stimulate myself. Some nights, I would watch backstage and watch Will and Becky in the scene alone and imagine what it would be like if I could see them, but not hear them at a distance, letting my jealousy flow and become a part of my next scene. I also spent 30-40 minutes every night, backstage in the complete darkness putting myself through the worst torture my imagination could summon up. It varied between "as-if" work of being myself living in Elizabeth's position, to me in my own life and how I could use substitution work to get me to a similar place for Elizabeth. I eventually found the perfect combination of both. The end scene of

the play was different each night. Some nights, I wept with abandon and could barely breathe with pain for my husband, some nights I felt a calm but stirring reserve. I didn't put a label on it, and I didn't try to "do", I just let it be. The costumes helped out immensely in painting the world of this play. When I saw Will in his ragged prison clothes for the first time on stage, I wept at the sight of him. He appeared emaciated and beaten. I didn't even think for a moment about myself or what I had experienced in prison for 3 months, pregnant and starving. Also, the top to my costume created an even shorter waist than I already have and made me look quite asexual and plain. This helped me in contrasting myself to Becky, who looked slender and youthful in her exact same style of costume. This helped to amp up my insecurities and jealousy even more.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

I am very proud of the cast of The Crucible. The respect for these human beings, the actual living, breathing people in the story and also the fictionalized version of them was instilled through the director. I felt as though each and every cast member held a sort of professionalism and duty to the roles they were taking on. I believe this play is a very important one, whether it's in regards to the Salem Witch Trials or HUAC's accusations of writers, directors and actors. The point is that this will always be a danger throughout any age. There is always a risk that a vessel, once ignited and heated can soon demolish a town with its hysteria.

## V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Norton, Mary Beth. In the Devil's Snare: the Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.

Miller, Arthur. The Crucible. New York, New York: Dramatist Play Service, Inc., 1998.